

Mid-Cities Commodore Club

Dallas/Ft. Worth

September 1989

MCCC NEWS

Volume 7 Issue 9

The President's Quarters

Jack DeTore

Since my last quarterly report in June, the club chapters have shown an extra surge of activity that is unusual for the "quiet" summer months. But the big news is what's coming this next quarter ... METCOM*89. This article covers both views.

WHERE WE CAME FROM . . .

The Amiga-By-The-Loop and Amiga Central chapters got to hear about the new hardware and software that provides 1024x1024 resolution in 256 colors out of 16 million; the AmigaDOS 1.4 with a new standard mode providing VGA 640x400x16 colors of non-interlaced graphics on multi-synch monitors; a super hi-res mode of 1280x200 on standard monitors; the AMax emulator that can turn the Amiga into a Mac and do it better and faster and cost less. The latest review was by Rick Bilyea, Bill Keatley and Jack Smith. It was a hardware shootout of 68020 and 68030 processors working with 68881 and 68882 math coprocessors and 32-bit ram that zapped benchmarks up to 50 (that's fifty!) times faster than a standard Amiga with the 68000 processor. Jack Smith wound up as "fastest gun in the West" with his machine cycling up to 30Mhz. The report by Amiga Central chapter president Bill Keatley concerning the capabilities of the Amiga running X-Windows as a smart terminal in a network is yet another instance where Amiga can be eminently cost-effective in a business environment. It would be great if the business community could see what Amigas could do in a networked situation alongside the other brands. Imagine being able to interact with color video in one of several windows on the screen while linked with other computers...for the price of Amiga. Imagine Jack Smith in a shootout with Mac, a 386 clone or even a VAX! Could it happen at METCOM*89?

Our Commodore 64/128 chapters have also been busy. The Arlington/Grand Prairie, HEB, and Ft. Worth chapters have seen a color graphics paint program originated by a member that can be used on the MCCC graphics BBS; special library programs on the nutrition building blocks for healthy diets; a

program for printing biorhythms; the ever-popular GEOS series: GEOS Write, Paint, and File. I understand that a new mind-gripper is out called "Where In The Hell Is Carmen SanDiego". (Gee, I had better check on that name). One of the HEB programs has a terrific club-wide potential: it involved using the computer for controlling HAM radio operation. Imagine being able to link up any of the club's computers via HAM radios or mobile phones. It's being done out there. Maybe we could demonstrate that during METCOM*89!

WHERE WE'RE HEADED . . .

Clearly, the main event for the year has yet to occur. It's our annual Metroplex Computer Conference ... METCOM*89. The date is Saturday, October 14th, from 10am to 5pm, at the Arlington Convention Center next to Arlington Stadium. The event Director is the club vice-president, Ned Kelly. Look for his article in this issue for additional details.

By popular demand from the exhibitors last year, we'll be combining the exhibit area into one large area this year. As of this writing several of the booths have been reserved. As last year, the club functions of public domain libraries, workshops for new computer owners and a flea market will be provided in the side meeting rooms to the south of the main exhibit area that we'll be using. Presentation areas will be provided to the north side for specific applications. Any member or software developer who would like to explain their product is invited to contact Ned Kelly for schedule.

National and local advertising of METCOM*89 has been started. We're betting that the whole family will want to see the video booth where their image can be captured to disk and printed as a color hardcopy. Don't miss it!

During the second quarter we were sorry to see two of our club officers having to resign due to unusual demands on their time. Bob Krause has

Which Printer Is Right For You?

by John Ware

Mid-Cities Commodore Club

Selecting the right printer is often a very confusing experience for the first time buyer. It can also confuse most experienced salespeople. There are dot matrix printers with up to 24 needles, ink jet printers, daisy wheel printers, thermal printers, and laser printers for those that can afford them. There are even color printers. On top of all of this, there are several different connection methods used.

The first step in picking the "right" printer is to understand a little of how they work. In general there are two classes of printers, impact and non-impact printers. The most common, and usually the cheapest, are the impact printers. These produce characters by forcing an inked ribbon against the paper.

IMPACT PRINTERS

All dot matrix types create the characters from individual dots. If you tell the printer to print a C it "knows" how many dots to use and where to put them to make the letter. Most have several built in character sets such as italics and different built-in (non-Commodore) graphics characters. Some even allow you to "define" a new character set and use it instead of the built-in characters.

Most of the dot matrix printers will also produce graphics. This works through a command string that you send to the printer to tell it where and how many dots to print. The typical 8.5 by 11 inch page is defined as 792 lines of 480 dots. This works out to 60 dots to the inch left and right and 72 dots to the inch up and down. The more expensive dot matrix printers can print up to 360 dots per inch in both directions. In almost all cases the software, such as GEOS, knows how to tell the printer where to put the dots.

Daisy wheel printers are another class of impact printers. These use a plastic or metal disk that has all of the characters. The printer will spin the disk around until the correct character is in position then drive it against the ribbon and paper to create the character. The characters are fully formed the same as on the standard typewriter. You can change the character set by changing the type disk. Graphics is almost impossible with this printer except for a few graphics symbols available on the type wheels.

NON-IMPACT PRINTERS

The non-impact printers form dots or characters by several methods. The most common method uses heat and heat sensitive paper. The print head is built somewhat like a dot matrix printer. These heat a spot on the paper causing it to turn blue or black depending on the paper used. This is the method used on some FAX machines. One popular variation is the Okimate color printer. This printer uses heat and a heat

sensitive ribbon. The print head heats up the ribbon to transfer a spot of colored ink to the paper. These printers are capable of doing most everything a dot matrix printer can except for the speed. They are usually slower.

Another method shoots very small drops of ink at the paper to produce the characters. The HP Deskjet printer is typical of this class of printer. The dot resolution can be as high as 300 dots to the inch. There are a lot of color printers that use the ink-jet print method.

The top of the line non-impact printer is the laser printer. These are basically a modified copying machine. They use a small low powered laser instead of light. In a normal copying machine light from the original is transferred to a light sensitive drum. A high voltage charge is placed on the drum causing the places where light hit it to take on a positive charge. The drum is then coated with a very fine powder. The powder sticks where there is a charge. The drum is then rotated against the paper causing the powder to be transferred to the paper. The paper is then heated causing the powder to melt into the paper, producing the finished copy.

Most laser printers are "postscript" printers. This type of printer has a dedicated computer inside with 1 to 3 million memory locations. The entire printed page is first generated in the internal computer memory. After this the picture is built up one line of dots at a time on the drum by exposing the drum with a laser instead of light. The rest is the same as the copying machine. Most laser printers are capable of 300 dots to the inch. The speed of the laser printer is usually from 1 to 20 pages per minute. Repeated copies of the same page is almost always faster than the same number of different pages.

CONNECTING THE PRINTER

The interface connections must also be considered. There are three methods, centronics parallel, RS-232 serial, and Commodore serial. The two serial connections are NOT the same. Connecting an RS-232 serial device DIRECTLY to a C-64 is guaranteed to fry the 64. Computers other than the 64 and 128 will use one of the first two interfaces.

SELECTING A PRINTER

Selecting a printer is always a tradeoff of cost, performance, wants, and needs. The questions you should ask include: What is the printer going to be used for: legal letters, camera ready artwork, program listings, general print-out, or graphics? How many pages a day are going to be printed? Do you need color? Cost per page of print-out? Speed? Will your

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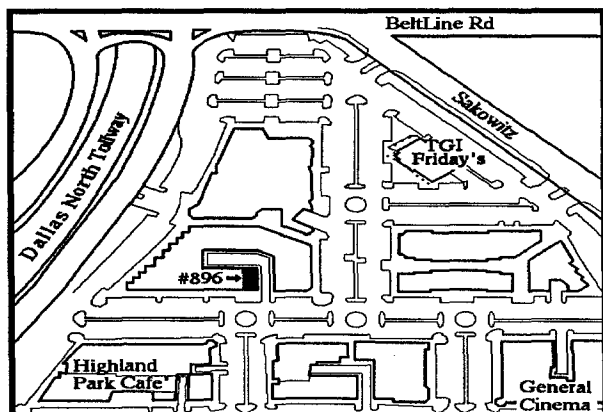
Refreshments

Specials on selected software

SCHEDULE

10:00 - 11:00	Deluxe Paint III demo with Marilyn Coughran	1:00 - 2:30	1st Public Showing of CanDo the hot new program from Inovatronics
11:00 - 12:30	Electronic Arts showing New Deluxe Titles and Games	3:00 - 4:00	Commodore Representatives answering your questions
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software support the printer? Interface method? Ease of getting required supplies? Cost of the printer?

If you must have fully formed characters then the only choice is a daisy wheel printer. If you can live with almost fully formed characters, then your choices can include all printers. Camera-ready artwork will almost always require a laser printer or inkjet because of the high dot resolution. A slightly lower dot resolution will allow you to include the dot-matrix, impact printers. Some of the mid range dot-matrix printers can use multi-pass printing that results in dot resolution very close to a laser printer.

If your primary use is graphics then DO NOT choose a daisy wheel. Your choices include all other printers. The higher dot resolutions will usually require more expensive printers. Another factor to consider here is does your graphics program support the printer? If it doesn't, choose another printer. The hassles and problems you avoid can be priceless to your sanity.

General print-outs and program listings do not normally require anything more than the lowest dot-matrix dot resolutions. The possible choices include all printers.

Color, speed, the amount of printing and cost of supplies should also be considered.

The typical laser printer cost is about 5 to 7 cents a page. Color is not generally possible but different color toners can be found. What you get with these is all blue, red, or whatever color the toner is. Supplies are usually easy to find. Printing is usually restricted to copy machine paper.

Thermal printers and thermal transfer printers will almost always require special ribbons and paper. It can cost as much as 15 cents a page for the color ones. They are most often slow but they are the quietest printers around.

The ink-jet printers share some of the qualities of both dot-matrix printers and thermal printers. Some require special paper, most require special inks. Supplies can be hard to find.

Daisy wheels and dot-matrix, impact printers can print on almost anything you can stick in the printer, including labels, colored construction paper and envelopes. Labels that are actually thick tin-foil can also be used. Many support full color. Limited color is possible on non-color versions by using colored ribbons. These printers have the lowest cost per page of any printers, usually 2 or 3 cents a page. Special paper is not required.

The interface should also be considered. Printers will have one or both of the industry standard interfaces. Some are also available that have a Commodore interface built in. The parallel interface provides the fastest possible data transfer but if the printer cannot print more than 960 characters a second, then there will not be any advantage over RS-232 as far as speed is concerned.

C64 and 128 users can actually use any one of the three interfaces. Adapters are available for the first

two. Those with a little hardware and software knowledge can connect a parallel printer DIRECTLY to the user port. While this is possible, I know of only ONE software package that can use it. Almost all 64 software expects the printer to be device 4 on the serial bus. Stay with the standard as close as possible for the least problems.

Where a printer is available with either the Commodore interface or a parallel interface, I recommend the parallel version and one of the many buffer boxes such as the Tymac, or others. The total cost difference is around \$40. It is well worth the difference for all of the additional things available. This also allows you to use the printer on other computers that do not have the Commodore serial bus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In general, your first printer purchase should be a middle to lower middle of the line dot-matrix printer with a centronics parallel interface that uses 8.5 inch wide paper. The printer should support the Epson graphics command set in addition to any others. Virtually all graphics software and most word processors support the Epson command set. The printer should be reasonably sturdy and any switches should be easy to use, including any dip switches inside the printer. You should get both friction and pin feed if possible. If not, get pin feed that can be adjusted from 3 inches to the full width of the printer.

For best results, the interface box should draw its power from either the printer or an additional power source, not the computer. The interface should have both a transparent mode in addition to one or more Commodore printer emulation modes. Ideally these modes should be selectable with easy to get at switches.

The final package will give you a printer that will fill 99% of your printing needs, costing from around \$200 to \$300. Add another 10% for color if color is needed. The cost of printing an average sheet will be about 3 cents, with supplies available in almost any store. It will usually last for years without any problems and provide more print modes than you will believe possible. The printer will print around 120 characters a second and will have a near letter mode that most people think came off a typewriter.

→ President's Quarters (From Page 1)

resigned as treasurer and has been succeeded by past-president Harold Williams. Tony Velez resigned as librarian and has been succeeded by Gary Campbell and assisted by Joe Ostrokol for the C64/C128 library. Club duties require that officers devote time to club functions that they otherwise would spend with their families. The best situation is for members to help these officers thru active participation in committees so that all would have time for the "higher priority" things in life. Have you ever wondered what each officer does for the club? Remember that the MCCC Board Of Directors meeting is open to any member.

New Stuff I Just Got

Amiga Reviews by Bill Raecke
Mid-Cities Commodore Club

ANALYTIC ART by Crystal Rose Software

I first became interested in Analytic Art after reading a brief mention of the program in an article on Fractal Art in INFO. The review said that the program was "the most impressive and the fastest" of the fractal generating programs being reviewed. It is not unusual for me to while away a day or three in a month generating pictures with Mandelbrot programs, so I was immediately interested in something reported to be faster and more versatile than the programs I already had. I was not disappointed.

I'll get one of the most important points out of the way immediately. Analytic Art is not copy protected. The disk contains six "modules" or programs as well as numerous examples.

FRACTALS

The first module on the disk is called "Fractals". This is the main fractal generating program and the most important on the disk. It supports both the Mandelbrot and Julia Sets. Don't look to me for an explanation of what the Mandelbrot and Julia Sets are -- I'm not a mathematician. If you haven't seen some of the fabulous pictures that this math can produce, check out some of the Public Domain and Shareware programs in the library -- particularly Mandel-FXP. What I CAN tell you is that Analytic Art provides more flexibility and more speed than anything else I have seen.

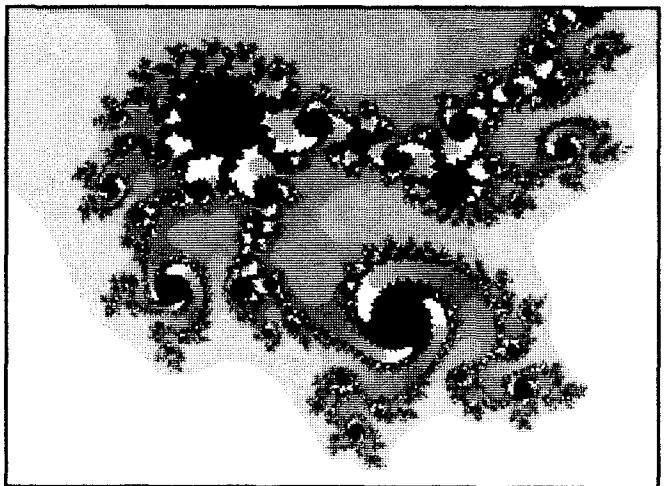
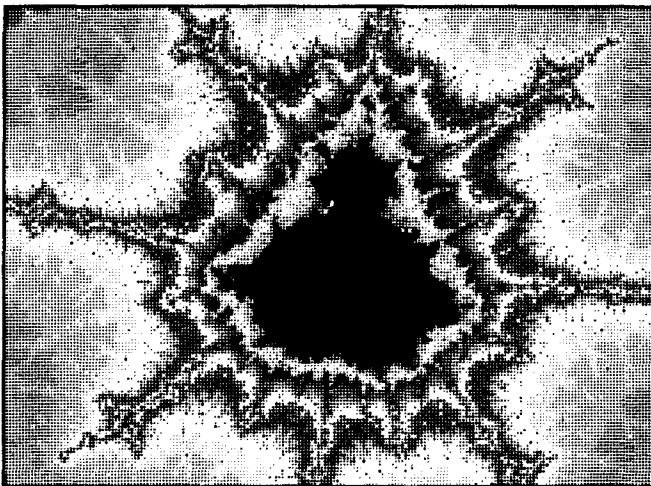
The program starts in the usual way, by displaying the Mandelbrot set. All of the standard resolutions are supported: 320 or 640 pixels across and 200 or 400 pixels high. The normal zoom features are provided allowing you to control the amount and the position of zoom with easy to use mouse controls. The control is very versatile and easy to use. You can also control your position within the set by entering

position and zoom parameters into a special window designed for the purpose. This is useful if you know what you are doing -- or it might be useful if you obtain a position from some other source that you want to explore. Positions that you find interesting can, of course, be saved to disk.

Julia Sets are handled differently here than I have seen before. For each position on the Mandelbrot set, there exists a unique Julia Set. Simply select a position on the Mandelbrot set either by drawing the section on the screen or by simply selecting a position with the mouse, and then select "To Julia" from the menu. You are then taken to a separate screen where the appropriate Julia Set is displayed. You may then control the display in the same ways as the basic Mandelbrot Set.

Color control is where the program really shines. Each color on the palette may be individually manipulated by adjusting the Red, Green and Blue values. Alternately, you can control the Hue, Saturation and Value if that is more to your liking. There is a built in spread function and you can limit the spread to just the Red, Green or Blue component if you desire. All of this so far is pretty standard, although more flexible and easier to use than in most implementations. It is in the "Change Mapping" menu that the real differences begin to appear.

"Change Mapping" is a way to provide infinite control over the colors in the display. Before it can be used, your fractal image must have been drawn with the "Count" option on. As you probably know, Mandelbrot or Julia images are produced by evaluating an expression to determine how closely the point fits in the set. The number of iterations which the expression had to be evaluated determines the color of the point. (This probably makes no sense, but as I said, I'm not a mathematician.) With the count option



turned on, that number is stored in computer memory. Color mapping is accomplished by assigning a color to each count value. For example, as a default, count values between 5 and 10 may all be assigned the color red. By modifying the mapping, you could assign a different color to each of the values between 5 and 10. When the screen is then remapped, its appearance will change drastically. The remapping, by the way, is very fast because the numeric value for each point on the screen has been pre-calculated and stored in memory.

The "Change Mapping" feature can also be used to bring out detail in the black areas of the set. These areas are black because, when taken to the maximum number of iterations, they still did not fit in the set. By assigning colors to these higher values and then remapping, you are telling Analytic Art to recalculate those portions of the drawing up to the new maximum limit and to display the appropriate colors. This process is also very fast because only the portions of the picture which had "maxed out" will be calculated. Setting the color mapping itself is made very easy by a series of gadgets such as "Fill and Go", "Multi Fill" and "Banding". (I won't attempt an explanation. Suffice it to say that they are straightforward and easy to use when you can see the results.)

THE OTHER PROGRAMS

The other programs on the Analytic Art disk are not nearly as useful or interesting as "Fractals", but they are all well done.

- "Spheres" provides a way to pull in an IFF image and wrap it around a sphere or and ellipsoid.

- "3D" will pull in an IFF image and will render it in three dimensions. You have control over height and perspective.

- "Sierpinski Gasket Generator" uses random numbers to produce fractal objects.

- "Henon Orbit Plotter" creates images of mathematical systems that dissolve from order to chaos.

- "Art Gallery" is a slide-show control program which can be used to display your art work.

SUMMARY

There are a couple of things I'd like to see added to the "Fractal" program. As currently designed, the program uses a 2X2, 4X4 or 8X8 image to give you a rough idea of what the finished fractal will look like -- that is, only every 2nd, 4th or 8th pixel is calculated. The resulting image is very rough and not very useful. Mandel-FXP uses a better method by allowing you to plot a smaller version of the image. Analytic Art could also use Mandel-FXP's method of fine-tuning the position. With the latter program, the arrow keys can be used to move the image in any direction, one pixel at a time. Only the resulting empty spaces are calculated and added to the display. One more thing I'd like to see is the addition of an overscan mode for producing final pictures without the border.

But these are small points. Analytic Art is a program well worth the investment. It is fast, easy to use, and flexible. And it produces beautiful art. If you have an interest in the Mandelbrot and Julia Sets, buy it. You'll be glad you did.

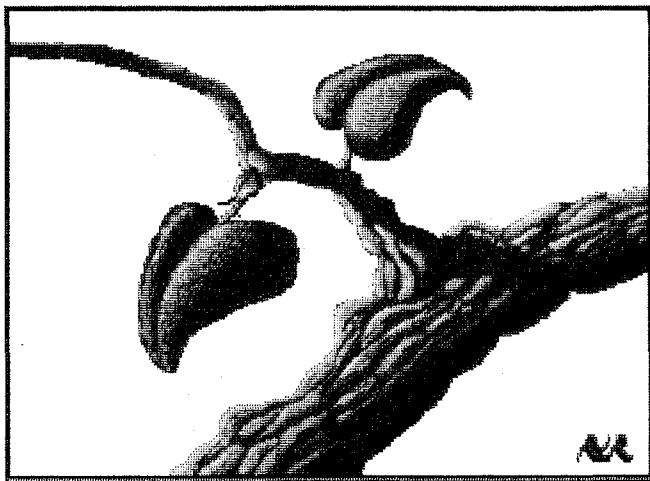
ERGOSTICK by Wico

ErgoStick is a joystick. It is the kind of joystick made to fit in the palm of your left hand. The stick is controlled with the right hand while the fire button is controlled by the index finger on the left hand. The packaging claims that this is "...something entirely new in video game control. It looks and feels entirely unlike any joystick you've ever encountered." Wico is either stretching the truth a little or they have been on another planet for a few years. I seem to remember a joystick manufactured by Epyx called the XJ-500 that looks just like this one. Well, no, actually the Epyx joystick is black -- these are beige, so I guess they really don't look the same. Silly me.

In all truth, however, the appearance is where the similarity ends. When you take the ErgoStick in your hand, you realize that it fits better than the Epyx joystick. And it is also covered with a soft plastic material that makes for a joystick that is much easier to hang onto. When you play a game with it, the difference becomes very apparent. The Wico is much more sensitive. Just a touch of the stick gets you where you want to go and just a slight pressure on the fire button is sufficient.

I have to admit that since using the ErgoStick, my scores haven't improved at all -- I kind of hoped that they might. The difference is that my hands don't cramp up and get sore like they do with other joysticks. The fit and sensitivity seem to combine to make my hands relax. I'm also hoping that these will last a little longer than the Epyx joysticks did. If my past experience with Wico is any indication (I still have Wico joysticks on my C64) they should last a good long time.

Another wholehearted recommendation.



CANVAS by Silver Fox Software

Canvas is a disk magazine. But wait -- it's not like the others. This is a disk magazine devoted entirely to art and animation. Those of us who attended the August meeting of the Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter were lucky enough to be treated to a show by Canvas artist Ryan Roberts featuring all of Volume 1.1 and previewing some of the animations from the next issue. For those who missed it, and for those who didn't, I'll give my impressions here.

I actually previewed the disk before the Amiga By-The-Loop meeting because I am a subscriber. The magazine is distributed on two full disks. Most of the disks in the first issue are taken up by animations. There were only a couple of still pictures. Hopefully this trend will continue since I enjoyed the animations much more than the still art.

I wish I could say that I enjoyed every frame, but that just wasn't the case. Some of the animations were quite ordinary, but I don't normally like to dwell on negatives. The animations that really hit the mark for me were excellent. In fact they were among the best I have seen. Ryan Roberts' art is very Disney-like in style. On the Amiga, the impression is that of watching a Disney cartoon. The animations "Red Fox" in which a fox chases a rabbit across a chasm, "Night in the Swamp" wherein a fish jumps out of the water to catch a fly, and "Waterfall Slide" in which a penguin slides down a waterfall and floats down a stream are among my favorites. But the best of the bunch in my opinion is the "Silver Fox Demo". It is beautifully drawn. It consists of 266 frames and multiple scenes and runs for twenty seconds.

Talking about art work is an exercise in futility. You will see samples in the newsletter that (if they turn out OK after reproduction) may give you some idea of what Canvas has to offer. The best way to see it is to buy the magazine and see for yourself. I don't regret being a subscriber. Canvas can be purchased at your local dealer or write the Silver Fox Software for subscription information.



Silver Fox Software
P.O. Box 551413
Dallas, Texas 75355

By the way, Canvas is not the only product Silver Fox Software will be offering. At the Amiga By-The-Loop meeting Ryan Roberts demonstrated the software he used to prepare his animations. I was very impressed by what I saw. It will soon be a commercial product. You may want to watch for it.

DATASTORM by Visionary Design Technologies

In last month's issue, I talked about having problems running Datastorm on my computer. I don't have a whole lot more to say. The game will run -- just not on my computer. It is not the memory expansion -- I disconnected it and still had the same problem. It's not the game disk itself -- it runs fine on other computers. I guess it's my disk drive. The drive has had heavy use now for almost four years and so it could be slightly off. But I can't help wonder if there is really a reason to copy protect a disk so heavily so as to make it unusable to anyone who's drive is not perfect. My other software works just fine.

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METCOM*89

The MCCC is proud to present METCOM*89. METCOM*89 is coming to the Arlington Convention Center on Saturday, October 14, from 10:00 AM until 5:00 PM. Admission is free. There will be a drawing at the end of the day for many doorprizes (you do not have to be present to win).

There will be presentations throughout the day on many different subjects. The following is a list of the presentations which are currently scheduled:

- HAM/packet radio on the C-64 by Curtis Crago, Sr.
- Computer Art by Marilyn Coughran.
- Commodore Update by Andre Frech.
- Amiga "Total Control Diet" & "Nutrition Guide for the Home" by Sylvester Lee.

There will be 10 to 15 dealers and developers present in the booths on the show floor.

The Club will be sponsoring a number of activities including the following:

- C-64/C-128 library of public domain software.
- C-64/C-128 workshop for help with your specific problems.
- A flea market of used C-64/C-128/Amiga hardware and software.
- Amiga library of public domain software.
- Amiga workshop for help with your specific problems.
- Photo booth to capture your likeness on several different media including an Amiga disk, color print, and a color iron-on for T-shirts.
- Exhibit of computer art which will be for sale.

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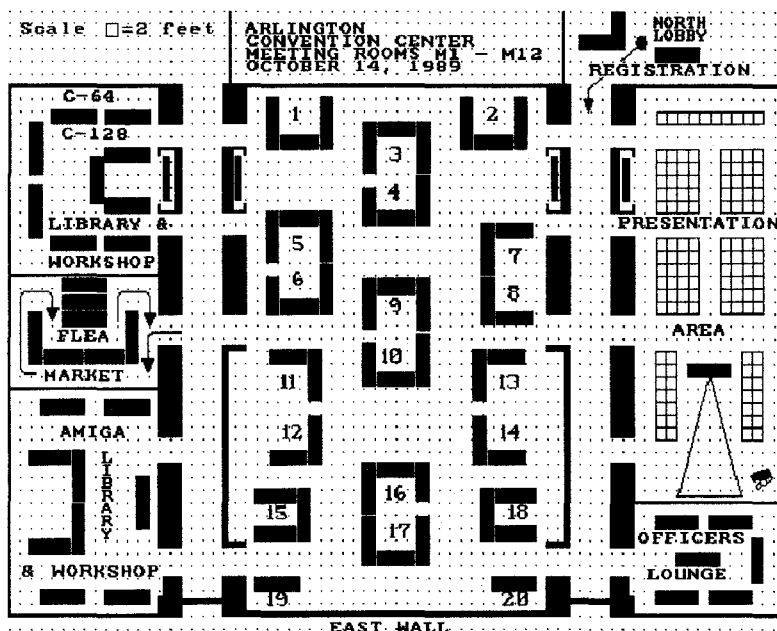
Gather up your used C-64/C-128/Amiga hardware and software for our flea market. The flea market will be run very similarly to last year's. The club will receive a 5% commission on all sales. Complete details on the flea market will be available at the September chapter meetings. Alternatively, you may contact the coordinators of the flea market who are Rich Meyer (292-6387), Fred Noble (838-5459), and Harold Williams (483-0537).

A new event this year is an exhibit of computer art we will be sponsoring. This will be a gallery of framed pictures, presentation books, hardcopies, books, etc. of art generated on Commodore computers. These pieces of art will be for sale with the Club receiving a twenty percent commission on all sales. All interested artists are invited to contact the art exhibit coordinator, Jody Reimers, at 817-561-2360.

Admission: FREE

Saturday, October 14
10:00 am 'till 5:00 pm

Arlington Convention Center
1200 Stadium Drive East
Arlington, Texas 76011
(Next to Ranger Stadium)



The Supra 2400zi Internal Modem

Hardware Review by Jim Piunti

From the Amiga Users of the Heartland Newsletter

The idea of an internal modem for the Amiga 2000 seems like such a natural one that I'm genuinely surprised that it took this long to get one on the market. I toyed with the idea of building an adapter that would allow the use of one of the multitudes of IBM-type internal modems, but lost interest when the project got more involved than I anticipated (...it stopped being fun).

I even went to the extreme of disassembling my Packard Bell 2400 external modem in an attempt to have the ultimate in Amiga modem portability. I mounted it internally, was dissatisfied with the result, and got even MORE frustrated that no one had taken the challenge of marketing a "real" internal modem for my Amiga.

SUPRA ARRIVES

Supra has finally complied. Their offering is the Supra 2400zi. It performs well, it's very well designed, and I'm overjoyed!

That isn't to say it's perfect, however. Thankfully, the actual design of the modem is considerably different than what's pictured on the outside of the box. The box shows a "short card" sporting two FJ11-type phone jacks mounted on one edge. I was immediately struck with the problem of how the user would connect and disconnect the modem/phone lines WITHOUT having to open the case.

The actual design has the short card sporting one RJ11 jack that connects to two others (in parallel) mounted on a backplane bracket. The parallel connection allows either of the two external jacks to act as the line connection. The one remaining can be used for plugging in your desk phone.

Aside from the much sought after internal design, the modem itself is rather conventional. It's based on the Intel 89024 modem chip set using low power NMOS chips. It's fully Bell and CCITT compatible and therefore, will talk with any modem worldwide from 110 to 2400 baud.

Supra advertises that it is "fully Hayes compatible", but I've learned from looking at other Supra products that their idea of the term is different than my own. My Hayes 1200 SmartModem boasts 17 user configurable S-registers. These registers allow the user to configure the modem for just about any type of computer using many different parameters. Supra lists all the registers, but places a bug, fat RESERVED sign next to six of them. When using my Hayes, I enjoyed being able to vary the "time between tones" (making dialing faster) by changing the S11 register from the default of 95ms to 50ms. Guess what? Next to S11 is that big RESERVED sign.

Reserved? Reserved for WHAT? Ah, well, if that's ALL I have to put up with...

No such luck! My next gripe is one of those things that some people will hate, but others will herald as a major innovative feature. Supra has designed their internal modem to use their own proprietary serial device. Their reasons are as follows: because of the internal design and the Amiga's multitasking capability, you may have as many internal modems installed as you have open slots.

To reduce the wear and tear on the Amiga's own serial.device, Supra provides each modem with its own device, called modem#.device (fill in the # with the corresponding modem number).

On the outside, this seems like a good idea, especially for those interested in running multi-line BBS's. But here's where the problem starts. If your modem software is written properly, it will make calls to your serial.device in your DEVS: directory, and indeed, Supra provides a program that will patch your software so that all calls to serial.device are changed to modem#.device. Unfortunately, I use OnLine! by MSS, one the most popular programs around, and guess what? It breaks the rules!

MSS wrote OnLine! so that it does not make calls to the DEVS:serial.device. The calls to the port are all hardcoded into the program. That means that there are no external calls to "trap", and therefore, your internal modem has no idea that you've loaded any comm software at all.

I called Supra, and to their credit, they explained that they contacted all the major comm software writers and asked for a copy of their product in order to make the modem compatible with as many different programs as possible. MSS did not respond. That, combined with the fact that MSS "broke the rules" in writing the software by not making calls to the



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serial.device, prompted Supra to say that they were not really concerned that OnLine! didn't work.

A call to MSS revealed the same ambivalence toward Supra. When I asked if their Platinum edition of OnLine! would allow the use of Supra's internal modem, I received a terse, "We're not sure, and we really don't have the compatibility of Supra's internal modem very high on our priority list".

Do I detect a tiny squabble between these two companies? ...am I starting to sound like the Bandito? I apologize...

Initially, I was miffed at having to change the modem software I'd grown to know and love. But I've since switched to Access! and I'm finding that I like it as least as much as I liked OnLine! (...no Z-modem, but Keith promises to fix that).

Supra supplies a list of comm programs that have been verified to work with the modem, either directly, or after running the "patch" program. They include A-Talk, Access!, Baud Bandit, Dr. Term, Digal!, Superbase Pro, and VT-100 (the shareware comm program). JR Comm was too new to be included on the list and my initial attempts indicate that it does NOT work. Sorry, guys...

SPECIAL FEATURES

One of the biggest gripes that I've heard against the internal modem is that you cannot see the status lights. Supra has provided an innovative, if slightly cutesy, answer. They've written a program that places a small window at the top of your screen. The window contains a graphic representation of the six status lights. The lights even "flash" as the normal lights would do when the modem is "modeming". OK, it's cute, but it DOES solve the problem.

Most of us are aware of the danger of high voltage spikes on the power line and take appropriate measures to suppress them. However, some are not aware that the phone line itself can present the same kind of danger to your sensitive modem circuits. One nice feature of Supra's internal is an on-board two-stage surge suppression circuit to protect the modem from the phone line. Being a casualty of a modem phone line strike last year during thunderstorm season (the whole system was UNPLUGGED ... except for the nasty little phone line!), this is a feature I appreciate.

SUMMARY

List price for the Supra 2400zi is \$179, a reasonable price for a 2400 baud modem, and the only game in town if you crave an internal for the Amiga. Although I miss my S11 register, overall, I'm very happy with my new internal. After all, nothing is perfect, not even our beloved computer.

Wait a minute! I have one more gripe: Supra, regarding your 2400zi name, I understand that the "i" stands for "internal", but why in the heck did you stick a "z" in there? Sigh... but then, how boring would the world be if I had nothing to complain about?

Super Student

C64 Software Review by Rebecca Atwell -- MCCC

While volunteering in the BISD this summer, we used some of the best educational software that I have seen. It is called Super Student and is from Micrograms, Inc. at 1404 North Main in Rockford, Illinois 61103. Their toll free number is 1-800-338-4726.

This software is available for grades K-5. This software has good graphics and sound. (Adults may question the good and sound in the same sentence.) I could not find it at any of the places we normally get C64 software. If ordered from the company it can be purchased for \$29.95 per grade level or \$149.75 for the complete set. Grades K and 1 have 1 disk each and the other 4 grades have 2 disks.

Nearly all the subjects that the children study are covered by this set. For example the grade 5 set includes: Math Speedway, Reader's Treasure Chest IV, Word Sleuth II, Figuring with Freddy, Wizard of Spellalot-grade 5, and Name the State.

If anyone wants to purchase this software, they can do so by sending a check for the above amount and pay no shipping or the company will ship C.O.D. This is fantastic software!

Late Breaking News

by Bill Raecke Mid-Cities Commodore Club

- Most of us know by now that Commodore is planning a big ad campaign for the Amiga beginning in October. The news is that the ads will be produced by none other than George Lucas. And there will be enough of them so that, numerically, everyone in the country will see twenty. Be looking for them.

- It has been discovered that Deluxe Paint III will not work properly with the new Super Agnes chip unless the system also includes some Fast RAM. As of this writing, Electronic Arts has not committed to date for a program fix.

- Here is the latest news regarding Software Terminal. While it is true that the retail store is no more, you can still purchase hardware by phone or by mail order. The address and phone number are listed elsewhere in this newsletter. Regarding the publishing business, Software Terminal will continue to market the Intruder Alert. The Tele-Games series of games which are played over the modem will be handled in the future by Scott Lamb and his company, Tele-Games. Write to Tele-Games, 205A Heights Lane, Fort Worth, Texas 76112 for information.

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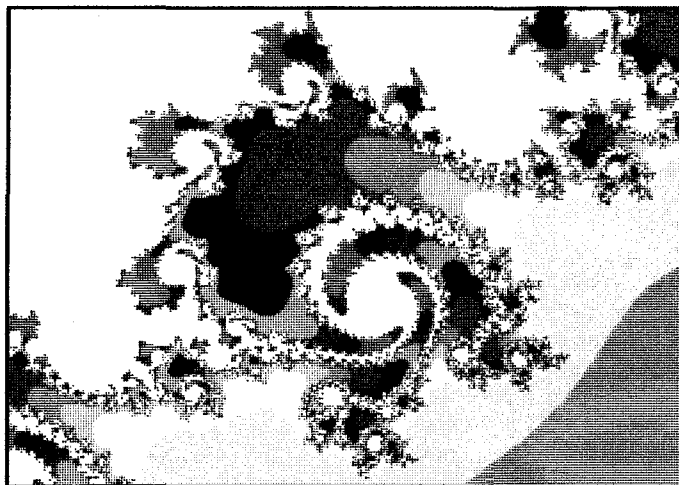
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Amiga By-The-Loop

Craig Bird

With 43 members and guests in attendance, this month's meeting opened with news about METCOM*89 coming October 14th. Volunteers are needed to help set up and run this event. Included in the many activities planned for METCOM is a booth to digitize a picture of yourself with a frame-grabber and print it out while you wait! Also is the possibility of having an ink jet printer capable of producing a media allowing you to do an iron-on transfer of that image on a T-shirt. To those of you having original software and documentation that you no longer use, our flea market will give you the opportunity to sell it and therefore clean out those closets and drawers. Many more details will be published elsewhere in this newsletter.

At this point in the meeting, David Owens introduced Aaron Hightower, who gave us a demonstration of MicroMan, a shareware program that he has developed. MicroMan is an emulator that will allow the user the capability of setting up customized pacman style maze games as completely accurate re-creations of the original (except for the character images which are

with 2MB memory and two floppy disk drives. Although not yet a finalized version, MicroMan has taken only four weeks to develop. Digitized sound routines were done by Ron Romero using Perfect Sound. These routines can be customized using any IFF sound format. The finished version is targeted for release in January.

Next on the agenda, a demo of Canvas, the disk magazine by developers Ryan Roberts and James Nelson of Silver Fox Software. Canvas is devoted exclusively to art and animation - nothing from the public domain here! Of the many interesting features of Canvas are (1) that the animation is primarily hand drawn to achieve the smoothest animation possible and (2) you can play with these animations by speeding them up, slowing down, stopping on a single frame, or advancing through the animation one frame at a time. You can animate backwards, forwards and also ping-pong. As Ryan Roberts explained, the method he used to help create his first animations was to imagine them as paintings in motion. In most paintings what you see is a captured instant of time in an event. What he tried to do, however, was not capture just an instant, but a few seconds worth of time in an event. To date, the Silver Fox Demo is his longest animation, covering a total of 266 frames in just over twenty seconds.

The first edition of Canvas, version 1.1 includes ten animations, seven of which will run on a 512K system. The "Silver Fox Demo", "Waterfall Slide", and "Soaring Bird" require at least 1MB.

To say the least, Canvas is very well done and well worth the investment! Thanks to Ryan Roberts and James Nelson for taking the time to share their very interesting and entertaining work with us.

Our monthly drawing

for the door prize capped off our meeting. August's prize was Canvas 1.1 donated by Silver Fox Software and was won by Brandon Oldenburg. Enjoy!

See you on September 12th at 7:30PM - North Richland Hills Church of Christ.

Amiga Central

Bill Raecke

For those of us who were able to attend the August meeting, it was a very interesting evening. This was the night of our long-awaited hardware shootout.

We had three computers at the meeting. Bill Keatley brought his 2000 equipped with a CSA 68020 board running at just over 14Mhz. Richard Bilyea's 2000 was equipped with Commodore's 68020 processor running at the same clock speed. And Jack Smith's 2000 was equipped with the brand new GVP 68030 board running at 30Mhz. The two 68020 boards were equipped with 68881 math co-processors, while the 68030 board was equipped with the faster 68882 math chip.

Not surprisingly, the 68030 board won hands down. The savage benchmark test, as an example, showed the 68020s to be 148 times the speed of a standard Amiga -- the 68030 was 248 times faster. Tests showed that programs such as Sculpt-4D would run about 20 times as fast on a 68020 equipped Amiga. Make that 40 times as fast for one equipped with a 68030. To put that into real terms, if you were performing a ray-trace that took 6 hours on a stock Amiga (not an unusual occurrence), that same ray-trace would take just 18 minutes on a 68020 equipped Amiga or just 9 minutes on one equipped with a 68030. That kind of a difference would not escape notice.

Second place was taken by Richard Bilyea's Amiga fitted with the Commodore 68020 board. It ran somewhat faster than the CSA board in all tests. Thanks to all three of our participants for an excellent and informative

copyright protected!). MicroMan was developed using Lattice C 5.0 and an Amiga 1000

CHIEF & EDITOR

demonstration. Sure hope I can afford one some day.

The demonstration ending with a surprise showing of the Amiga X-Windows product. The X standard allows computers which are attached via a network to access each other's software. This is a major new product which, when used in conjunction with the new Ethernet card, should open up many business markets which until now have been closed to the Amiga. As a bonus, X-Windows on the Amiga operates in its own custom screen -- The normal Amiga operating system remains active and can still be used as always. Perhaps we can have a full demonstration of this new product at a future meeting.

See you at the next meeting.

Arlington/GP Eddie Allen

The Saturday workshop was well attended again. The meeting is held on the second Saturday of the month, starting at 1:30, until we are run away, at the Grand Prairie Memorial Library, just down from the police station. If you have a problem, a question, or just want to chew the fat, come and join us.

The Tuesday night meeting in Arlington saw our highest attendance for the year. It sure felt good to see everyone there.
Hank

Costello
a n d
associates
presented an
enlightening,
interesting,

presentation on some productivity programs for the C64/C128. A home made video on getting started in GEOS was shown, which invoked a few scattered chuckles. Hank's business, Budget Computers, is in the process of creating sundry "how to" videos similar to what he presented. The beauty of this, is that you can learn COMPLETELY at your own pace. Bill Gordon showed how they use GEOS Publishing to create their monthly newsletter, which is now called "The C.I.A." (Commodore, IBM, Amiga). The wrap-up was on SuperBase, showing a custom menu Hank created effortlessly, which also showed the flexibility of the product.

We welcome Herschel Gibbs back as Vice President. He will be completing the remainder of Brad Dumler's term, who is still with us, but due to scheduling conflicts, is unable to devote the time and energy necessary for the post. Next month will see a discourse on Disk Operating systems, and what they can do to make our computing easier. Glen Herring will make the presentation (basics and helpful utilities). Rounding the evening off, I will try to bring some DOS wedges out of the cold.

Until then, be cool, and here's hoping to see you there.

Fort Worth Mary Louise Hagemeyer

The Fort Worth Chapter greeted some members we hadn't seen for a while, and we heard some sad stories. One member moved to a new house and didn't put a cardboard protector in her disk drive. Now she's facing a repair bill, as is the member whose surge suppressor didn't prevent lightning from zapping his C64.

For the BASIC lesson, we looked at a program for displaying a menu and choosing options from it.

J i m

Marshall reviewed library disk #285, which prints disk directories in a variety of sizes and formats.

We're grateful to Okley Moss for making the long trip across town to present a program about the club's Bulletin Board Systems. He showed us how to use the features of the boards and passed along many helpful hints.

Next month Jim Marshall will be back with DOS II--the second part of his discussion of the 1541/1571 DOS. We'll have disk reviews and BASIC, too. The meeting will be Saturday, September 16, 1:30 p.m., in the library on Hulen Street.

Hurst/Euless/Bedford Robyn Wilson

The August meeting had a great turnout of people. We had 22 show up, four of which became new members. We had an equally good discussion about Star printers, given by Bruce Umbreit.

The printer models that were discussed were the ND-10, NX-10 and NX-1000C models. All have capabilities, such as near letter quality (NLQ), condensed, emphasized, subscript and superscript, underlining and lots more. Bruce handed out several examples of these fonts. One included a newsletter called "The Umbreit Village" which seemed to be about a trailer park. It showed not only the print style, but also that these printers could handle graphics well.

At the next meeting on September 16th, we are having a discussion on copy programs used to backup expensive software. We will also take nominations for next years' officers.

METCOM*89 is back! This is to be held on October 14th from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Arlington Convention Center. It is a fantastic way to learn more about the C64, C128, and Amiga computers. Admission is free! We hope to see you at our next meeting in September and at METCOM*89 in October!

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The Mid-Cities Commodore Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business. Appropriate and legal use of all types of software is encouraged by this club.

The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC, C64, C128, and Amiga) are registered trademarks of Commodore, Inc.

Our meetings are open to all. Membership dues are \$20 per year or \$12 for six months and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional \$12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC ASCII and Graphic bulletin board systems.

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The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is the Monday following the third Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail to P.O. Box 813, Bedford, Texas 76095.

Calendar of Events

Sept 2 MCCC Board of Directors
10:00 AM - N.Richland Hills Community Ctr.
Jack DeTore, 817-275-3762

Sept 16 Hurst-Euless-Bedford Chapter
1:30 PM - Hurst Recreation Center
Eldor Luedtke, Jr., 817-626-0518

Sept 9 Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop
1:30 PM - Grand Prairie Library
Louis Nailor, 214-262-4576

Sept 19 Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter
7:00 PM - Arlington Community Center
Glen Herring, 817-572-0489

Sept 12 Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 PM - N.Richland Hills Church of Christ
Brent Wood - 817-246-3707

Sept 21 Amiga Central Chapter
7:30 PM - Arlington Community Center
Bill Keatley, 817-485-0666

Sept 16 Fort Worth Chapter
1:30 PM - Southwest Regional Library
Bob Krause, 817-292-6639

Oct 7 MCCC Board of Directors
10:00 AM - N.Richland Hills Community Ctr.

Oct Newsletter Deadline - Sept 18

METCOM*89
October 14 - 10 'till 5
Arlington Convention Center

Normal Meeting Schedule

1st Sat MCCC Board of Directors
2nd Tues Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
2nd Sat Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop

3rd Tues Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter
3rd Thurs Amiga Central Chapter
3rd Sat Fort Worth Chapter
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